

of the Congress. I'm very serious about sitting down as often as possible with people from both parties to have frank discussions about issues that concern the country. I believe there is a very good opportunity for us to exceed expectations.

Expectations are that nothing will get done. I'm confident that the people here in Washington and Members of the Senate don't agree with that. We're going to talk about education, and we're going to talk about taxes. We'll talk about the patients' bill of rights—a variety of issues that are of concern, and what we call front burner issues, issues that should be making it through the Congress soon.

I want to thank the Members for coming. I'm honored that they would come down from the Hill to visit the Vice President and me. Thanks for coming.

Q. I have one question about——

The President. I'll catch you tomorrow. You missed your chance at the third press availability. [*Laughter*]

Q. When are you going to do your first news conference, Mr. President?

The President. These mini-news conferences count. [*Laughter*]

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:32 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting the Blueprint for Assistance To Help Medicare Beneficiaries Buy Prescription Drugs

January 29, 2001

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Enclosed please find the blueprint for my program to provide immediate assistance to help certain Medicare beneficiaries buy prescription drugs. I look forward to working with the Congress to enact these principles into law and to working together on comprehensive Medicare reform.

Sincerely,

George W. Bush

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Richard B. Cheney, President of the Senate.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Republican Congressional Leaders and an Exchange With Reporters

January 30, 2001

Legislative Agenda

The President. It's an honor for the Vice President and the Secretary of Treasury and myself, and OMB Director, to welcome the leadership in the House and the Senate on the Republican side. We've had a wide-ranging discussion; discussed tax relief and how we can pay down national debt and have tax relief, which all of us around this table firmly believe we can do.

We also discussed the fact that there's a lot of Americans who have got a lot of consumer debt, and we must be mindful of those hard-working Americans. And part of the tax relief package is to allow people to better manage their own finances with their own money. We had a discussion about education.

We discussed, particularly the leader and I and Members of the Senate, discussed the need to get our nominees through the Senate. And I hope, in the spirit of bipartisanship, there will be no further delays on the confirmation process for John Ashcroft and other nominees of ours. I certainly appreciate how fast the Senate worked, initially, but it's time for the delays to end. It's time for a vote on all our Cabinet officials.

This is—will be a series of conversations we'll have throughout my tenure, and I really enjoy this. It's been a good, frank discussion.

Interest Rates/Tax Cut Legislation

Q. Do you think the Fed should cut rates now, sort of stimulate the economy? And in the discussion of tax policy, there has been some disagreement between the White House and the Speaker and others over whether you should have one big package of tax cuts or to do it in pieces.

The President. First, Mr. Greenspan needs to make his decisions, independent of what I think. I learned a pretty good lesson